# Report to the Kentucky Board of Education

# **Interagency Dual Credit Task Force**

August 2007

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The Task Force appreciates and carefully considered the comments and suggestions on dual credit and access to college-level learning provided by the 3,000 middle and high school students participating in the statewide student summits on secondary reform.

# **Definitions**

For the purposes of reading this document, please refer to the following definitions:

"Academic Advisor or Advisor" means the person on staff at the local school who is responsible for working with a student on the development and implementation of his/her Individual Learning Plan. This person may be a School Guidance Counselor, but may also be a faculty member or other adult who has been assigned this responsibility by the school.

"Accelerated Courses" mean rigorous courses of study in which students choose to engage that are of more depth and complexity than the general course offering at the school. As an example, Kentucky Revised Statute 158.6543(4)(b) identifies Advanced Placement courses as "accelerated."

"Credit-Based Transition Courses" is a broad term encompassing courses that generate at least high school credit but are specifically designed to prepare a student for successful transition to college or work based on the ILP. They are usually taken during the senior year, but may be taken earlier. The Kentucky Board of Education has identified Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Dual Credit, Dual Enrollment, certain Career and Technical Education courses, and catch up courses designed for students who face remedial placement in college. Dual credit courses are a sub-group of credit-based transition courses, but not all credit-based transition courses are dual credit. For instance, "catch up" courses taken during the senior year to prepare a high school student for college may generate high school credit, but will not generate college credit.

"**Dual Credit**" describes a situation in which a student is enrolled in a single course for which the student is earning simultaneously both high school and college credit. The course and the student have status at both the high school and the college.

"Dual Enrollment", also known as "Concurrent Enrollment," describes a situation in which a high school student is also enrolled in college class for which he/she is earning college credit but not high school credit. Usually, the college class is taken in addition to the student's full high school schedule. The student has status at both high school and college but the course does not.

**"Early College High School"** is a specific reform model designed for low-income youth, first-generation college goers, English language learners, students of color, and other students underrepresented in postsecondary education can simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an Associate's degree or up to two years of credit towards a Bachelor's Degree. Generally, this is

five-year program operated by a school district on a college campus through a strong P16 partnership.

"Individual Learning Plan or ILP" means the online educational planning tool made available through the Kentucky Department of Education for every student in grades 6 – 12 in the public schools. The ILP helps students identify academic and career interests, plan their course of study and extracurricular opportunities, document their progress, find and apply to college, and create a resume to support applications for admission, employment, scholarships and other educational opportunities. Each student is required to have a completed ILP to meet high school graduation requirements. Schools are held accountable for supporting students in developing the ILPs and for providing services that will lead to the fulfillment of ILP goals for successful transition to college and work.

# Introduction

In April 2006, the Kentucky Board of Education established the Interagency Task Force on Dual Credit to examine the need for comprehensive policy for dual credit and to make recommendations in the broad issue areas of rigor, access, affordability and program evaluation. The Board's action was preceded by a study conducted by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, which concluded that:

"The growth of dual enrollment in recent years has prompted increased interest in this educational option and reignited discussion of dual enrollment policy. Discussion of dual enrollment policy quickly becomes complicated, however, because dual enrollment has been proposed to serve a wide range of educational goals, including reduction of high school drop-out rates, and improved workplace readiness. At this point, however, we do not have the data needed to evaluate these possibilities.<sup>137</sup>

Based on the intense interest in dual credit in the state and national research identifying dual credit's role in high school reform<sup>ii</sup>, the Board decided to build upon the Council's work to determine if and how the state might exploit dual credit as a strategy to improve chances of success for college and educational attainment. The Vision Statement adopted by the Task Force positions dual credit as a way to improve student preparation for postsecondary education. It also recognizes that dual credit can help to ensure curriculum standards and expectations will be aligned P-16.

Response to the Board's invitation to participate on the Task Force was strong and participation has expanded since the first meeting in June 2006. Throughout the course of this work, the Kentucky Board of Education, the Council on Postsecondary Education, the Education Professional Standards Board, the Commissioner's Advisory Councils and many other entities have been briefed on Task Force discussions. The Task Force's intention was that the recommendations eventually developed represent a broad consensus of the major stakeholders around a common vision.

While the Task Force has good representation from major stakeholders in Kentucky, its ability to synthesize national research and to conduct research was limited. The Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) asked Jobs for the Future (JFF), a nonprofit national policy and research firm, to help the Task Force enhance dual enrollment opportunities for high school students. Through the Ford Foundation's Bridges to Opportunity Grant, KCTCS sponsored the work as part of its policy initiative to support career pathways.

The deliverables from the JFF research team were delivered in phases, beginning in February 2007 and continuing through May. At that time, the Task Force began crafting a set of initial recommendations to be delivered to the Kentucky Board of Education in August.

What follows are the major work products of the Task Force to date: Vision; Anticipated Benefits; Essential Conditions; Principles; and, Recommendations. This work is accompanied by the two papers produced for the Task Force by Jobs for the Future: *Briefing Paper to Kentucky Dual Credit Task Force*, February 2007; and, *Recommendations for Data Collection and Analysis to Kentucky Dual Credit Task Force*, May 2007.

# **Interagency Task Force on Dual Credit**

#### Vision

By the year 2010, every student who meets eligibility criteria shall have equitable access to appropriate dual credit coursework as part of a broad base of educational opportunities that prepare him or her for postsecondary education and success.

#### **Benefits**

- Students will be better prepared for postsecondary education and training because they know what's ahead.
- Students will have more realistic information about the demands of college life as well
  as the academic and non-academic skills they will need to succeed in postsecondary
  education and training.
- All teachers, faculty, administrators, and advisors at the high school and postsecondary levels will gain a deeper understanding of how to prepare students for a successful postsecondary experience.
- Students who may not consider themselves college-bound will have opportunities to experience success and be motivated to pursue postsecondary education.
- Students will have expanded curricular options to fulfill the goals outlined in their Individual Learning Plans.
- Schools will have additional options for planning the senior year, so that students remain engaged in rigorous coursework that prepares them for postsecondary.
- Students will be able to obtain a postsecondary degree or certification at lower cost and in less time.
- Institutional relationships between colleges and secondary schools will be strengthened.

#### **Essential Conditions**

- Curriculum standards and expectations will be aligned P-16.
- Dual credit will be included as a core strategy within the agenda of secondary reform, the Statewide P-16 Council, and the Commonwealth's goals for increasing the educational attainment level of its citizens.
- There must be incentives in a comprehensive system of dual credit for students, educators, schools and institutions.
- All parties will participate in evaluation of outcomes against the goal to increase postsecondary access and success.
- Funding is an essential condition of equitable access.

# Principles: Access, Rigor, Relevance and High Levels of Support

- 1. All high school students should receive opportunities to take college courses based on demonstrations of readiness in the subject areas.
- The academic standards and assessments used to determine eligibility for college course taking should be consistent statewide and tied to transparent state standards and assessments aligned with standards for college and workforce readiness.
- 3. The state should widely develop schools, programs, and courses that provide underrepresented and under prepared high school students with the support they need to become eligible for and succeed in college courses.
- 4. Cost should not stand in the way of access for students who are eligible for college courses.
- The state should only fund courses and programs that lead to a postsecondary degree or occupational credential. At least some of these should be offered on college campuses.
- 6. The state should adopt a do-no-harm approach to the majority of current dual credit efforts, allowing them to continue. However, state financial support for dual credit should require that new or existing programs conform to state-level dual credit policy.

**Executive Summary of Recommendations** 

The summary of each of the major recommendations of the Task Force is presented below.

Following, are pages providing additional detail and rationale for each.

The reader is encouraged to review the two Jobs for the Future papers before reading the

recommendations in detail. "Rationale" for each recommendation are taken directly from the JFF

reports.

Recommendation One: Before Dual Credit - A Proposal to Create Readiness for More

**Students** 

Establish transitional courses as pathways for under-prepared students that lead directly to dual

credit or college credit course taking when students demonstrate readiness.

**Recommendation Two: Student Eligibility** 

Establish statewide eligibility standards for dual credit course taking that consider a student's

readiness in the content area and the relevance of the college course to the student's Individual

Learning Plan (ILP).

**Recommendation Three: Dual Credit Core** 

Identify content and performance standards from the postsecondary general education core and the

career pathways specialty core that are aligned with and expand upon high school graduation

requirements and identify the courses in which they are taught. Refer to this curricula or set of

courses as the Dual Credit Core, or a suite of courses that represents a clear pathway for the

transition from high school to college.

Recommendation Four: Access to Fulfill the Individual Learning Plan

Ensure that students who meet eligibility standards are provided with equitable opportunity to

participate in the Dual Credit Core, through a combination of delivery systems.

**Recommendation Five: Funding** 

Provide free or deeply discounted tuition and instructional materials to eligible students for Dual

Credit Core courses that are relevant to the student's ILP

**Recommendation Six: Pathways for Underserved Students** 

Through policy, funding and professional development, promote and research the effectiveness of

new school models and new programs that engage underserved students in the Dual Credit Core as

a pathway to postsecondary degree or credential.

Recommendation Seven: High Quality Instruction and Instructors

Educate and retain high quality instructors for dual credit programs in sufficient numbers to meet

the needs of students.

Recommendation Eight: Research Agenda

Adopt a research agenda to gauge progress on achieving the anticipated benefits of dual credit

course taking.

### **Recommendations and Rationale**

# Recommendation One – Before Dual Credit: A Proposal to Create Readiness for More Students

While this proposal is not specifically about Dual Credit programs, it is essential that high school and postsecondary collaborate to ensure that more students are ready to participate in rigorous, college-level coursework as soon as possible - - certainly by the time they leave high school. The Task Force offers this suggestion related to transitional courses leading directly into dual credit or college-credit bearing coursework as a strategy for supporting all youth, and especially at-risk youth, to and through successful transition.

Establish transitional courses as pathways that lead directly to dual credit or college credit course taking when students demonstrate readiness.

- Provide incentives to create partnerships of high school and college faculty that will result in the creation of rigorous competency-based curricula that develop discipline-specific skills and knowledge students should master before taking college-level courses. These curricula should be highly engaging and the demonstrate relevance of the academic discipline to careers.
- ➤ Certify students who complete transitional courses as ready for credit-bearing college coursework in the content area.
- > Transcript transitional, college preparatory coursework at the high school level only.
- Ensure that students who complete transitional coursework prior to graduation have immediate access to and are advised to take a dual credit course in the content area to ensure that gains made are not lost prior to matriculation.
- ➤ Prohibit the use of dual credit for developmental or remedial courses. (This does not preclude inclusion of developmental content in credit-bearing college courses for students who need additional time or supports but, if the student is in a dual credit course, he/she must be making progress towards college credit.)

# **Recommendation Two – Student Eligibility**

Establish statewide eligibility standards for dual credit course taking that consider a student's readiness in the content area and the relevance of the college course to the student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

- ➤ Ensure that students are not precluded from taking college courses in one content area for which they can demonstrate readiness because they are not able to demonstrate readiness in all.
- Establish multiple measures of readiness, as applicable, to increase opportunities for students to gain access (i.e, end of course exam scores, WorkKeys assessments, ACT sub-score, Advanced Placement exam score in prerequisite course).
- ➤ Consider relevance to the ILP as a criterion for eligibility on an individual student basis.
- Expand the Individual Learning Plan to include prompts at key transition points (such as that from middle to high school) for students, teachers and families about readiness standards for college course taking.
- Add functionality to the Individual Learning Plan that addresses the first two years of postsecondary education for dual credit experiences, so that planning can reflect both high school and college and accumulated credits can be tracked at both levels.

#### **Rationale:**

- ➤ Determining appropriate dual enrollment eligibility criteria should be driven by knowledge about who is best served by dual enrollment and under what conditions. Research suggests that promising and successful programs are rigorous and have standards –prerequisites ensure that students are ready for postsecondary courses. The programs also provide high academic and social support, helping students to become eligible for postsecondary courses.
- ➤ JFF's research of promising policies and programs nationally suggests that eligibility policies should avoid all-or-nothing rules that block access to all subjects because of a student's lack of proficiency in a single area. At any given time, young people may be ready for higher-level learning in one academic domain yet not in another. Also, students and teachers should clearly understand, and be motivated by, the standards they must meet to be eligible for dual enrollment. Dual enrollment

is particularly motivating when it offers the prospect of getting a head start on college and saving on college costs. (page 4)

Recommendation Two supports Principles 1, 2 and 3.

#### **Recommendation Three – Dual Credit Core**

Identify content and performance standards from the postsecondary general education core and the career pathways specialty core that are aligned with and expand upon high school graduation requirements and identify the courses in which they are taught. Refer to this curricula or set of courses as the Dual Credit Core, or a suite of courses that represents a clear pathway for the transition from high school to college.

- > Focus incentives for students, schools, educators and institutions on the Dual Credit Core.
- ➤ Consider the Dual Credit Core as "accelerated" courses in the same manner as Advanced Placement courses for the purposes of KRS 158.6543(4)(b), Assessment of Achievement Goals (SB 130).
- Encourage the use of performance-based credit policies at the high school to ensure that Dual Credit Core courses can replace high school courses without regard to seat time so that students may move ahead as soon as they are ready.
- Identify additional opportunities to provide incentives and rewards to students, educators and schools for appropriate participation in the Dual Credit Core courses. Examples: Could students meeting performance benchmarks in Dual Credit Core courses qualify schools for bonus points in the Accountability Index in the same way that a passing score on an Advanced Placement exam does? Or, could KEES funds support student participation in Dual Credit Core courses. Or, should achievement of certain performance benchmarks in Dual Credit Core courses qualify students for a revised Commonwealth Diploma?
- > Specify that developmental or remedial courses may not qualify as dual credit.
- Establish a mechanism to add additional courses to the Core and to periodically review and revise the standards on which the Core is based.

#### **Rationale:**

➤ Kentucky continues to strengthen its high school graduation standards and assessments so that they are aligned with the expectations of readiness for college and the workforce. (page 3)

- Positive results across programs were related to assurances that college courses were rigorous and high rigorous and high quality. These assurances included some prerequisites based on student demonstrations of academic readiness and strong faculty preparation and qualifications. course location was another factor. Courses on college campuses are likely to help students identify themselves as college students, acclimate to the college environment, and expose them to postsecondary academic expectations. The study noted that courses offered on the high school campus should be supplemented by college campus exposure. (page 14)
  - ➤ JFF is recommending that the state design dual enrollment to promote college and workforce preparation for a broad range of students. One way to ensure quality in such a multifaceted system is to align assessments, eligibility criteria, and courses with clear state standards. For example, the state might tie these key aspects of dual enrollment to nationally benchmarked standards for college and workforce readiness in math and English. (page 13)

Recommendation Three supports Principle 2 and 5.

# Recommendation Four - Access to Fulfill the Individual Learning Plan

Ensure that students who meet eligibility standards are provided with equitable opportunity to participate in the Dual Credit Core, through a combination of delivery systems.

- ➤ Beyond the Core, students should have equitable opportunity to participate in higher levels of college courses that are specifically aligned with the Individual Learning Plan.
- Ensure that students receive the same number and kind of credit towards the diploma from the high school and hours towards the degree from the postsecondary institution for a dual credit course that he/she would have received had the course not been dual credit.
- Each student's Individual Learning Plan should include appropriate credit-based transition experiences in the senior year, if not before. Dual credit is one option.
- Make a comprehensive offering of Dual Credit Core courses and student support services available online through collaboration between the Kentucky Virtual High School, the state's postsecondary institutions and the Kentucky Virtual Campus, including online access to advising, tutoring and library services.
- ➤ Develop information and advising resources for students, teachers and families that explain the characteristics, advantages and implications of participation in various credit-based transition opportunities, with particular emphasis on Advanced Placement and Dual Credit.

➤ Provide a mechanism to qualify dual credit courses from out of state institutions for applicable incentives if the course was needed for fulfillment of a student's ILP and is not available or accessible inside the state (similar to Academic Common Market).

#### Rationale:

- ➤ Because eligibility criteria are established locally, access to dual enrollment is likely to be uneven across the state. Some districts or colleges could be inhibiting students who might benefit. Others could be admitting students who are ill prepared. (page 3, *Briefing*)
- ➤ By policy, local secondary school site councils must provide opportunities for students to pursue college-level learning through Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate, or dual enrollment options. (page 2, *Briefing*)
- Pone of Kentucky's education goals is to ensure that students and families have "more realistic information about the academic and non-academic skills they will need to succeed in postsecondary education and training." National research suggests that dual enrollment can familiarize high school students with college expectations and can be particularly motivational when college courses are made available to them at no cost or at a discount. The advent of Kentucky's online Individual Learning Plan (ILP) presents an opportunity to capitalize on dual enrollment's motivational potential by encouraging all students to participate in dual enrollment by their senior year. (page 12, Data)

Recommendation Four supports Principles 1, 2 and 3

# **Recommendation Five - Funding**

Provide free or deeply discounted tuition and instructional materials to eligible students for Dual Credit Core courses that are aligned to the student's ILP. Establish priorities for funding that consider financial need as well as degree of relevance to the student's postsecondary plans.

- ➤ Develop a funding model that recognizes the true cost of providing access to and transcripting dual credit. Develop a model that matches of partially matches tuition discounts and/or ADA funds used to pay those costs so that tuition is not a barrier to access.
- Restrict funding and other incentives to courses that are supplemented with student supports, such as advising and tutoring.
- Limit state support to eligible courses that lead to a degree or credential planned for in the student's ILP.

Add functionality to the Individual Learning Plan that addresses the first two years of postsecondary education for dual credit experiences, so that planning can reflect both high school and college and accumulated credits can be tracked at both levels.

#### Rationale:

- ➤ If Kentucky wants to use dual enrollment to prepare more students for college and workforce expectations, then it should structure dual enrollment finance according to principles that advance access, rigor, relevance, and high support. For example, unless they are provided by the state, tuition costs could hinder access for low-income students. Other costs affecting access are textbooks and fees.
- Finance also relates to the courses and programs a state should or should not fund to achieve its goals. Students should experience the rigors of authentic college courses that help them to learn the skills and gain the credentials needed for careers with family-sustaining wages, but college campus-based courses are more expensive to offer yet motivate students by exposing them to the college environment. Moreover, high-support dual enrollment programs entail additional costs for colleges and high schools to create the academic, social, and financial supports needed by the target population. (page 7, *Briefing*)

Recommendation Five supports Principles 3, 4, 5 and 6.

# **Recommendation Six – Pathways for Underserved Students**

Through policy, funding and professional development, promote and research the effectiveness of new school models and new programs inside existing schools that engage underserved students in the Dual Credit Core as a pathway to postsecondary degree or credential.

- Establish an innovation fund to support models serving students at high risk of not going to college and succeeding in college so that the Commonwealth can identify and replicate effective strategies for increasing persistence to and success in postsecondary education. Include existing models such as early college high schools as well as models more appropriate for rural settings where daily physical presence on a college campus is not feasible.
- Publish and expand awareness of course taking sequences that lead to and through dual credit as transition to degrees in higher education.

> Through the ILP, leverage participation in career pathways to engage and retain underserved students.

#### Rationale:

- Some programs target students who are underrepresented in higher education or academically at risk. A study of state and local program evaluations by the American Youth Policy Forum suggests that of those programs, the ones that appeared to have positive data on high school and college-going outcomes possessed the following qualities: They provided "a range of extra supports for students . . . from intensive preparatory coursework to advising services." . . . In addition, positive evidence across all the programs was linked to collaboration between high school and postsecondary faculty and administrators, which promoted shared responsibility for dual enrollees.
- Florida, with among the nation's most comprehensive dual enrollment programs and K-20 data systems, estimated that approximately 77 percent of dual enrollees in 2004 earned a C or better in college courses both those taught by community college professors and those taught by high school teachers serving as adjuncts. Of 10 of the first early and middle college high schools nationally, 633 students enrolled in 1,893 college courses in 2004-05, with a pass rate of 96 percent. Moreover, studies employing some controls for previous academic achievement have found that dual enrollees who go onto college in Arizona and New York City large programs serving students from diverse racial backgrounds have significantly higher GPAs or persistence rates than college students with no dual enrollment background. (page 13, *Briefing*)

Recommendation Six supports Principles 3 and 5.

# **Recommendation Seven – High Quality Instruction and Instructors**

Educate and retain high quality instructors for dual credit programs in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of students.

- Establish comprehensive policy about the ability of college instructors to teach dual credit courses, examining the latitude provided by non-regulatory guidance from the United States Department of Education.
- ➤ Establish incentives that will increase the number of high school teachers who qualify to become adjunct college faculty and will encourage those who already qualify to become adjuncts.
- ➤ Provide professional development that engages high school teachers, advisors and college faculty in a shared understanding about dual credit programs and supporting the students they serve.

#### **Rationale:**

How can Kentucky ensure that there are enough high-quality instructors to expand access to dual enrollment courses? Does state policy enable college instructors to teach courses for high school credit in addition to college credit? How can it increase the number of high school teachers who meet the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' requirements for adjunct college faculty? There is great latitude under the U.S. Department of Education's non-regulatory guidance about the conditions under which college teachers may teach high school students. However, the question of quality teaching runs deeper than qualification issues.(page 12, *Briefing*)

Recommendation Seven supports Principles 1 and 3

# Recommendation Eight - Research Agenda

Adopt a research agenda to gauge progress on achieving the anticipated benefits of dual credit course taking.

- Structure the conceptual research framework around three essential questions:
  - Are students better prepared for postsecondary education and training?
  - O Do students who are not typically college bound have opportunities to experience success and be motivated to pursue higher education?
  - O Do students obtain a postsecondary degree or certification at lower cost in less time?

- To assess the impact on students of various academic and social backgrounds, define data elements that will yield information about both the dual enrollment experience and the educational outcome. It is anticipated that data will need to be collected in at least four major categories: Student; Instructor; Course; and, Instance of Course.
- Establish the research agenda to include short term goals that can be measured through aggregation of statistics at regular intervals and long term goals that require longitudinal analysis to understand the relationships among student characteristics, the dual credit experience, and education/workforce outcomes.
- > Support budgetary and programmatic initiatives that will build dual credit research capacity:
  - Build upon the uniform course code structure to ensure that dual credit courses are appropriately coded and that course completion data is collected.
  - o Establish a P16 Data Warehouse.
  - Increase staffing resources at the institutional and state levels to conduct data analysis and research.
  - Formalize data sharing agreements to guide the procedures for collecting, sharing, analyzing and releasing data in accordance with the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
  - Support interagency efforts to track the employment status of former students to assess the impact of dual credit on success in the workplace.

#### **Rationale:**

- The Dual Credit Task Force has laid out a vision for dual enrollment as "part of a broad base of educational opportunities that prepare [students] for postsecondary education and success." It has defined expected education benefits for students and the state. Such purposes and goals are preconditions for evaluating whether the state is getting what it wants from dual enrollment and identifying needed changes.(page 1, *Data*)
- ➤ Kentucky has many of the pieces in place for doing research that can complement its increased interest in supporting and enhancing statewide dual enrollment opportunities: data about students' backgrounds and college outcomes, unique student identifiers at the K-12 and postsecondary levels, and a general sense of cooperation between the K-12 and postsecondary sectors.
- Although there is a natural fit between these pieces, the state has not yet put them together in a way that would enable students, families, institutions, or state agencies to evaluate or

improve the benefits of dual enrollment. Doing so requires a coherent research plan, resources, good will, respect for individual privacy, and respect for mutually defined processes. (page 12, *Data*)

Recommendation Eight supports implementation of all the Principles.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (2006): *The Dual Enrollment of High School Students in Postsecondary Education inKentucky*, 2001-02 to 2004-05.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>ii</sup> Hoffman, Nancy. (2005). *Add and Subtract: Dual Enrollment as a State Strategy to Increase Postsecondary Success for Underrepresented Students*. Boston: Jobs for the Future.